

Message Text

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ACTION ITF-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ORM-01 SR-02 VO-03 SCA-01 AID-05 IGA-01 SSO-00

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R 140451Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5719

INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 3041

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: VS, AS, PFOR, SREF

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDES ON RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE
REFUGEES

REF: (A) STATE 109995; (B) CANBERRA 2494; (C) GENEVA 3465

1. SUMMARY: AUSTRALIAN POLICY ON ACCEPTANCE OF VIETNAMESE
REFUGEES REMAINS OFFICIALLY AS STATED APR 22 BY PRIME MINISTER
WHITLAM (REF B), THOUGH WE UNDERSTAND WHITLAM IS CONSIDERING
ACCEPTING HALF AS MANY AS CANADA. WE DO NOT RPT NOT KNOW WHAT
ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS WHITLAM MAY HAVE MADE IN MEETINGS IN
WASHINGTON DURING RECENT VISIT. AUSTRALIAN OPPOSITION HAS URGED
ACCEPTANCE OF QTE SOME THOUSANDS END QTE OF ADULT VIETNAMESE
AND WILL PROBABLY PRESS GOVERNMENT TO TAKE MORE FORTHCOMING
ATTITUDE THAN APPARENT HERETOFORE. WHITLAM MAY SHORTLY MAKE
PUBLIC STATEMENT ON NUMBER OF REFUGEES AUSTRALIA WILL TAKE.
END SUMMARY.

2. GOA POLICY ON RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES OFFICIALLY
REMAINS AS STATED BY PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM IN PARLIAMENT APR 22
(REF B), AND NO TARGET NUMBER OF REFUGEES WHO WILL BE ACCEPTED
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INTO AUSTRALIA HAS EVER BEEN STATED PUBLICLY. EMBASSY DOES NOT

RPT NOT KNOW, OF COURSE, WHETHER THERE WERE FURTHER DISCUSSIONS OF REFUGEE ISSUE WITH WHITLAM DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON, BEYOND FRAGMENTARY REFERENCES IN PRESS REPORTS. OPPOSITION SHARPLY ATTACKED GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT MAY 13 ON INDO-CHINA POLICY, BUT THERE WAS NO RPT NO REFERENCE TO VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. WE BELIEVE OPPOSITION WILL PRESS GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT LARGER NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND RECALL THAT IN EARLY APRIL OPPOSITION LEADER MALCOLM FRASER SAID HE THOUGHT AUSTRALIA SHOULD TAKE QTE SOME THOUSANDS END QTE OF ADULT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES.

3. AUSTRALIAN DEPT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECRETARY ALAN RENOUF PROVIDED AMBASSADOR WITH FOL SUMMARY OF WHITLAM'S VIEWS ON REFUGEE PROBLEM, IN CONVERSATION MAY 13:

WHITLAM HAS BEEN GRADUALLY COMING AROUND TO ACCEPTING A LARGER NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE IN AUSTRALIA. HOWEVER, HE INSISTS ON DECIDING THESE MATTERS HIMSELF AT HIS OWN TIME AND IN HIS OWN WAY. HE ALSO REQUIRES THAT WHATEVER AUSTRALIA DOES RELATES TO AN INTERNATIONALIZED PROGRAM UNDER UNHCR. SINCE GOA IS NOW UNDER PRESSURE FROM UNHCR AS TO THE OVERALL NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AUSTRALIA WILL ACCEPT, THE PRIME MINISTER MAY SHORTLY MAKE A STATEMENT WITH REGARD TO THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE THAT HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT IN AUSTRALIA.

WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER WAS IN KINGSTON HE TALKED THIS MATTER OVER WITH CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU, AND IT WAS LARGELY ON THAT BASIS THAT WHITLAM TOOK THE POSITION IN WASHINGTON THAT AUSTRALIA WOULD ACCEPT HALF THE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ACCEPTED BY CANADA. IN WHITLAM'S VIEW, CANADA SHOULD TAKE MORE BECAUSE IT IS FRENCH-SPEAKING, AS ARE MANY OF THE REFUGEES, AND BECAUSE CANADA ALREADY HAS QUITE A COLONY OF VIETNAMESE WHICH FACILITATES ASSIMILATION OF THE SOME 3,000 TO 5,000 REFUGEES CANADA WILL ACCEPT. WHEN WHITLAM WAS TALKING OF TAKING ONE-HALF THE CANADIAN FIGURE, WHITLAM HAD 1,500 IN MIND. HOWEVER, RENOUF BELIEVES THAT CANADA MAY RAISE THE FIGURE TO 5,000, IN WHICH CASE AUSTRALIA MIGHT BE WILLING TO ACCEPT 2,500.

AUSTRALIA HAS ALREADY APPROVED THE ISSUANCE OF VISAS FOR 500 VIETNAMESE, OF WHOM 100 HAVE ALREADY BEEN DOCUMENTED. THESE 500 FALL WITHIN THE CRITERIA ESTABLISHED APRIL 22 BEFORE WHITLAM LEFT FOR KINGSTON AND WASHINGTON. IF GOA ACCEPTS 1,000 OR 2,000 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE 500, NEW CRITERIA

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CATEGORIES WILL HAVE TO BE ESTABLISHED. THESE ARE LIKELY TO INCLUDE VIETNAMESE WHO HAVE BEEN EDUCATED IN AUSTRALIA, THE PARENTS OF VIETNAMESE IN AUSTRALIA, AND THOSE WITH PROFESSIONAL SKILLS NEEDED IN AUSTRALIA WHO ALSO HAPPEN TO HAVE SOME CONTACTS IN AUSTRALIA.

DURING WHITLAM'S ABSENCE IN JAMAICA AND WASHINGTON, THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER, DR. CAIRNS, AUTHORIZED 63 CAMBODIANS TO COME TO AUSTRALIA FROM BANGKOK. HE DID THIS ON HIS OWN

WITHOUT THE PRIME MINISTER'S APPROVAL, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THESE PARTICULAR CAMBODIANS SEEMED TO BE SUITABLE AS IMMIGRANTS TO AUSTRALIA.

4. COMMENT: DEPT IS NO DOUBT AWARE THAT GOA HAS UNDERTAKEN TO ACCEPT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO MAY COME TO AUSTRALIA IN SMALL BOATS FROM SINGAPORE (REF C). WE DO NOT RPT NOT KNOW IF THIS NUMBER WOULD BE SUBTRACTED FROM OVERALL FIGURE THAT GOA MAY ANNOUNCE. PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN VETERANS GROUP, RETURNED SERVICEMEN'S LEAGUE, HAS CALLED FOR INCREASE IN NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ADMITTED TO AUSTRALIA AND HAS AID IT WILL SEEK SPONSORS IN AUSTRALIA TO FACILITATE THEIR ENTRY.
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